

NEW HAMPTON ROADS PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE IS WITHIN REACH

In February, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) selected Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative for enhanced passenger rail service between Richmond and Hampton Roads. Alternative 1 includes up to three

conventional speed (79 mph) trains along the Peninsula/CSXT route to Newport News and up to six higher speed (90 mph) trains along the Southside/NS route to Norfolk.

The Commonwealth will take both a state and federal level approach to implementing this new service.

At the state level, the Commonwealth is working to initiate conventional speed intercity passenger rail service between Richmond and Norfolk in the short term. The General Assembly recently passed a budget amendment that authorizes Rail Enhancement funds to be used for improvements to the rail line between Richmond and Norfolk without a 30 percent private match. This provision allows the Commonwealth to move forward with a proposal by Norfolk Southern, the owner of a portion of track between Richmond and Norfolk, which outlines the necessary improvements to support new passenger rail service to Norfolk. CSX continues to work to identify improvements between Richmond and Petersburg to allow the Norfolk service to begin.

While these improvements are taking place, DRPT will evaluate potential operating fund sources for intercity passenger rail to provide recommendations to the General Assembly prior to the start of the 2011 session. A source of operating funding must be identified to operate new passenger rail service between Richmond and Hampton Roads.

At the federal level, the Commonwealth must receive federal funding in order to bring higher speed rail to Hampton Roads. DRPT is working to complete the Tier I Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to reflect the Commonwealth's preferred alternative. After reviewing the FEIS, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will issue a Record of Decision and provide guidance on next steps in the federal review process.

DRPT will continue to work at both the state and federal levels to bring more transportation choices to the Hampton Roads region.



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the April 2010 issue of Connection, DRPT's quarterly newsletter. The last issue was my first as the Director of DRPT, and things have certainly been busy since February!

We are seeing a lot of progress on some of our key projects. The CTB selected a preferred alternative for enhanced passenger rail service to Hampton Roads, we held public meetings on the Broad St. Rapid Transit Study, the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project reached the "one-year of construction" milestone, and the Tide light rail system is experiencing fresh momentum under new leadership.

We also have a few projects on the horizon, such as a partnership with Virginia Tourism Corporation to offer Amtrak Virginia vacation packages, an educational event to show Northern Virginia CEOs how much telework can help their organizations' bottom line, and the development of the FY2011-2016 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP).

Finally, the 2010 Virginia General Assembly session recently concluded, and DRPT will soon begin work on the action items resulting from this year's session, while continuing to work with federal and state representatives to secure additional funding for transportation in Virginia.

I hope you enjoy reading the April issue of Connection, and feel free to send us your business news for future issues at drptpr@drpt.virginia.gov.

Thelma Drake

DRAFT FY2011 – 2016 SYIP AVAILABLE SOON

At the May 19 CTB meeting, DRPT and VDOT will present the draft SYIP for fiscal years 2011 – 2016.

The program includes funding for rail, transit, transportation demand management (TDM) and highway projects over the next six years. Public hearings will be held in Richmond on May 19, in Northern Virginia on May 26, in Hampton Roads on June 2 and in Salem on June 3 to gain public feedback on the draft program. The CTB will act on the recommended program at its June meeting.

For more information on the SYIP process, visit www.drpt.virginia.gov/about/Finance.aspx.



UNLOCK GRIDLOCK 2010

On May 19, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at the Gannett Headquarters in McLean, Va., Telework!VA and Telework Exchange will host Unlock Gridlock, a free half-day event focused on promoting alternative commuting options to Northern Virginia businesses. At the event, CEOs and human resource managers will learn how alternative commuting options can help their bottom line and how to start or expand telework programs. Details on the event can be found at www.teleworkexchange.com/unlockgridlock.

THE TIDE ADVANCES

Newly appointed HRT President and CEO Philip Shucet has provided a surge of momentum to the Tide. Since he joined HRT in January, Shucet has streamlined HRT's management of the light rail system's construction and initiated a comprehensive budget review of the Tide project to ensure that it can be brought to completion as quickly and efficiently as possible. Recent activities on the system, which is approximately 60 percent complete, include work on four of the 11 stations. The light rail system is anticipated to begin operations in May 2011. For more information, visit www.ridethetide.com.



BROAD ST. RAPID TRANSIT STUDY



In February, the Broad St. Rapid Transit Study team held meetings to educate the public about the study, which is evaluating rapid transit improvements

along a seven mile stretch of the Broad St. Corridor in Richmond. The meetings were well attended and provided a comprehensive overview of the study and concepts under evaluation. The study team is currently reviewing the comments received and conducting an initial screening of preliminary alternatives to determine which are feasible to move forward. The team will then define the remaining alternatives in greater detail and begin evaluating station locations. Follow the progress of the study at study.ridegrtc.com.

DULLES CORRIDOR METRORAIL ADVANCES



Phase I construction of the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project is moving quickly despite the challenge of winter weather. With nearly all of the utility relocation work complete, the project activities have shifted to constructing piers to support the track, laying station foundations and tunneling for the underground segments. More than 1,100 people are currently working on Phase 1 of the extension, from the East Falls Church Metro Station to Wiehle Avenue. For more information or to sign up for project alerts, visit www.dullesmetro.com.

TAKE A BREAK WITH AMTRAK VIRGINIA



of the most popular travel destinations in Virginia. The Virginia Tourism Corporation and localities have joined

With the new Lynchburg Amtrak Virginia service, it is easier than ever to travel to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and more. The service also makes it easier to explore some

with DRPT to offer vacation packages to destinations along the route. The first packages in the series offer vacations to two of the route's most popular destinations, Charlottesville and Lynchburg, where you can enjoy the history of the areas, see the sights and enjoy comfortable accommodations, all at a discount when you travel by train. Traveling by train is often faster than driving and helps take the stress out of your trip. For more information on these vacation packages, visit www.amtrakvirginia.com.

SPRING GRANTEE WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED

DRPT will hold its annual spring transit and TDM grantee workshops in mid-May. The Northern Virginia workshop will be held on May 12 at the Herrity Learning Center in Fairfax, the Richmond workshop will be held on May 13 at DRPT's headquarters in downtown Richmond, and the Roanoke workshop will be held on May 18 at RADAR of Roanoke. Workshops will take place from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., with the morning session covering general

topics such as planning and project updates, performance reporting training and financial updates, and the afternoon breakout session covering transit or TDM specific topics. For more information on the workshops, contact Courtney Ware at courtney.ware@drpt.virginia.gov.



2011 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION CONCLUDES

The 2011 Virginia General Assembly session concluded on March 13. Below is a summary of the major bills that impact rail, transit or TDM in the Commonwealth.

- **HB421** gives the Commonwealth Transportation Board the authority to flex up to 20 percent of available mass transit capital funds to operating if operating funds for that year are anticipated to be less than the previous year.
- **HB688** and **SB25** clarify the fines and penalties for using a fraudulent Virginia Railway Express train ticket or riding past your ticketed stop.
- **HB690** and **SB28** allow certain transportation district commissions and their contractors that provide transit service to require fingerprint checks and FBI criminal background checks for certain applicants and employees.
- **SB553** requires the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with DRPT and VDOT, to report to the General Assembly by November 1 each year regarding the efforts taken to increase transit use and reduce highway congestion through transit and TDM strategies.
- **SI63** requires DRPT to study methods for funding high speed and intercity passenger rail operations in the Commonwealth and provide recommendations prior to the start of the 2011 session.

DID YOU KNOW...

- The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently allocated the final \$12.5 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for projects in Virginia, closing out the Commonwealth's \$30.5 million ARRA grant. This funding will help enhance the Commonwealth's transit systems, create jobs for Virginians and help bolster local economies.
- DRPT restructured its Web site to be more intuitive and user friendly. See the new structure at www.drpt.virginia.gov.
- National Train Day is May 8, 2010. Amtrak Virginia is participating in the event to be held at Union Station in Washington, D.C. More information on National Train Day is available at www.nationaltrainday.com.
- Amtrak Virginia service is slated to expand this summer as additional service is introduced between Richmond and the Northeast Corridor in July 2010. Visit www.amtrak.virginia.com for more information.
- DRPT added transit feasibility studies to the Transit Reference Materials page of the DRPT Web site. Feasibility studies for Altavista, Haymarket, Radford and BABS/Ft. Pickett are available at www.drpt.virginia.gov.

FEDERAL NEWS

- The Public Transportation Safety Program Act, sponsored by Congressman Oberstar, would authorize the federal government to establish a public transportation safety program to enforce nationwide rail and transit safety standards. The bill is currently under consideration in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.
- The Tax Extenders Act of 2009 would extend tax credits for transit systems operating hybrid vehicles and using alternative fuels. Introduced in the House, the bill has been passed with amendments in the Senate and will be re-evaluated in the House before it is sent to the President for signature.
- In March, President Obama signed the HIRE Act, which extends transportation authorization through December 31, 2010, and provides the funding necessary to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent.
- In February, President Obama published his FY2011 budget, which includes \$10.79 billion in transit and \$2.88 billion in rail funding. The next step in the budget process is for Congress to develop a budget resolution, which is anticipated in mid-April.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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| 4/26 | National Transportation Management Conferences, Madison, WI |
| 4/30 – 5/5 | 2010 International Bus Roadeo, Cleveland, OH |
| 5/2 – 5/5 | 2010 Bus and Paratransit Conference, Cleveland, OH |
| 5/8 | National Train Day |
| 5/12 | Transit/TDM Grantee Workshop, Fairfax, VA |
| 5/13 | Transit/TDM Grantee Workshop, Richmond, VA |
| 5/18 | Transit/TDM Grantee Workshop, Roanoke, VA |
| 5/19 | SYIP Hearing, Richmond, VA |
| 5/19 | AASHTO Spring Meeting, Natchez, MS |
| 5/19 | Commonwealth Transportation Board Meeting, Richmond, VA |
| 5/19 – 5/21 | Women's Transportation Seminar Annual Conference, Washington, D.C. |
| 5/24 – 5/25 | Transit Oriented Development Training, Washington, D.C. |
| 5/26 | SYIP Hearing, Fairfax, VA |
| 6/2 | SYIP Hearing, Chesapeake, VA |
| 6/3 | SYIP Hearing, Salem, VA |
| 6/6 – 6/9 | 2010 Rail Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia |
| 6/9 – 6/10 | Implementing Rural Transit Technology Training, Charlottesville, VA |
| 6/10 – 6/11 | Virginia Transit Association 2010 Annual Conference, Richmond, VA |
| 6/13 | Northeast Association of State Transportation Officials Conference, Wilmington, DE |
| 6/16 | Commonwealth Transportation Board Meeting, Richmond, VA |
| 6/24 | Community Transportation Association of Virginia Board Meeting, Hampton Roads |
| 7/8 | Virginia Rail Advisory Board Meeting, Richmond, VA |
| 7/14 | Commonwealth Transportation Board Meeting, Richmond, VA |